

Four Steps for the Earth: mainstreaming the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

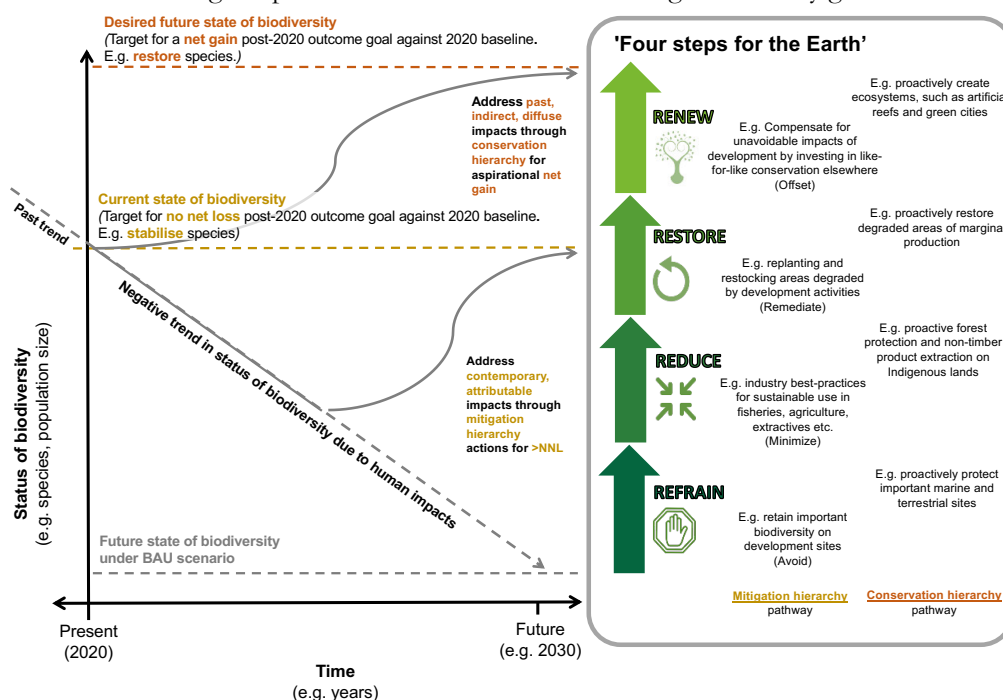
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The need

Nature is in crisis. This crisis undermines nature's contributions to human well-being, and represents a major risk to the global economy. 'Bending the curve' on biodiversity loss necessitates transformative change. The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is an opportunity to drive such change, with a bold vision of 'living in harmony with nature' by 2050. However, ambitious goals are only meaningful if they can be mainstreamed into society and translated into action. This proved challenging for the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, not least due to difficulties in: translating global goals into tangible conservation actions; scaling from National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) up to global outcomes; and, incorporating local and non-State contributions (e.g. individuals, businesses). Resolving this implementation challenge, and developing a roadmap for *how* society can 'live in harmony with nature', is critical for delivering the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

A solution: the Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy

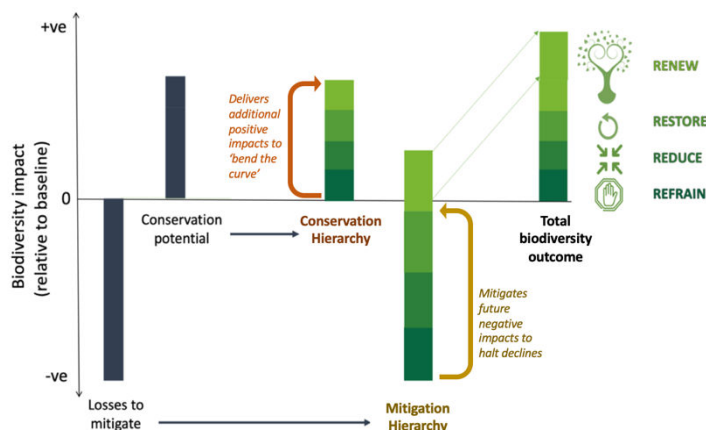
A collaborative team of 22 international organisations has developed the [Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy](#), which can support mainstreaming of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework by guiding identification, implementation and monitoring of specific **actions** towards overarching biodiversity goals.



The framework is structured around four steps, which are based on the well-established 'mitigation hierarchy' for addressing the impacts of development on biodiversity (First **1. Avoid** and then **2. Minimise** impacts as far as possible, then **3. Restore/Remediate** impacts that are immediately reversible, and finally **4. Offset** any residual impacts, to achieve a desired net outcome (usually no net loss (NNL)).

However, recognising the need to address past, indirect and diffuse negative impacts on biodiversity; and to incorporate conservation potential beyond direct impact mitigation for aspirational net gain/biodiversity recovery outcomes, the MCH unites impact mitigation with proactive conservation under a single framework. In doing so, the MCH outlines 'Four Steps for the Earth': **refrain**, **reduce**, **restore** and **renew**; which can be implemented via two pathways: the **mitigation hierarchy**, for mitigating future negative impacts, and the **conservation hierarchy**, for delivering additional conservation potential.

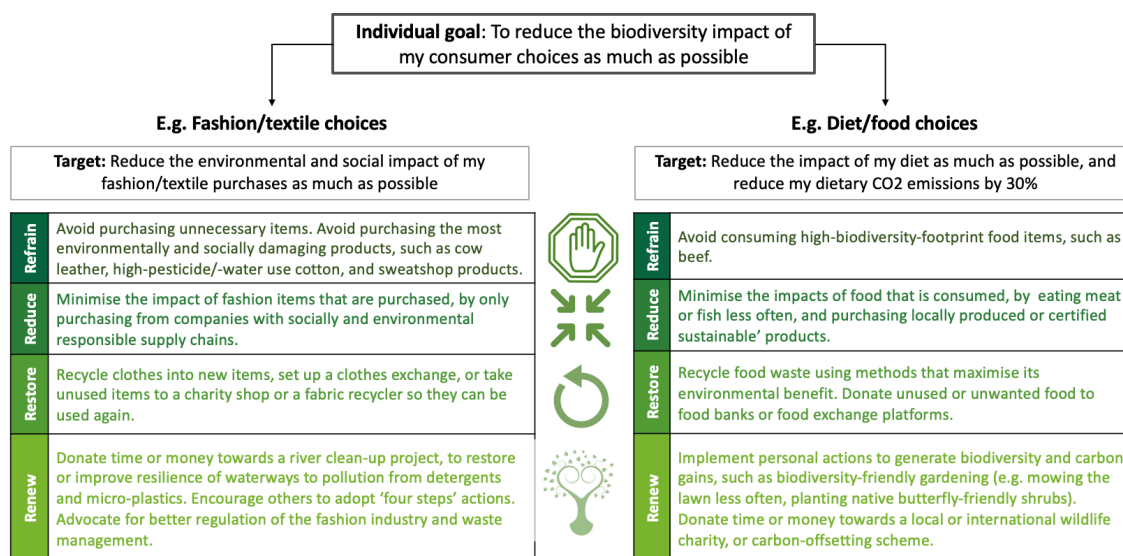
This provides a simple set of steps which can guide the delivery of net positive outcomes for nature, relative to a baseline (right). The intuitive simplicity of the ‘Four Steps’ idea, and its broad applicability to a range of users and circumstances, can foster wide ownership, allowing for seemingly disparate actions to be accounted for across sectors, scales, and nations. It has also recently been [endorsed](#) by governmental and non-governmental members of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as “critical for delivering the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework”



Using the Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy

The Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy can be applied by any stakeholder group seeking to be accountable for their biodiversity losses and gains, or seeking to enhance biodiversity that has been degraded by others. It can transcend scales from national or multilateral-level actions to local, individual or group actions, allowing for differentiated commitments towards common goals. For example, the MCH can be applied:

- **To support synergies between international environmental policy instruments**, by providing a common framework for action towards inter-related policy goals.
- **Across scales within a national jurisdiction**, whereby national targets filter down to sub-national and project-level actions (see [policy](#) examples).
- **By Parties to the CBD**, whereby countries have differentiated commitments based on their financial wealth and past negative impacts on biodiversity.
- **By companies**, to provide a simple, transparent framework for businesses to assess their impacts on nature, and explore pathways to mitigate impacts (see [private sector](#) examples).
- **At sub-national levels**. There is a plethora of opportunities for creative application of the Mitigation and Conservation Hierarchy by sub-national and non-governmental actors, for example: cities, small-scale fisheries, indigenous peoples and local communities (see examples from [diverse sectors](#)).
- **By the general public**, to guide individual actions that can contribute towards net positive outcomes for nature during daily consumer choices, as per the figure below (see examples for [individuals](#)).



For more information see our [foundational paper](#) or contact us by any of the means below